

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the application are respectfully requested in view of the amendments and remarks herewith, which place the application into condition for allowance.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

Claims 21-31, 33-42, 45-48, and 50 are pending in this application. Independent claims 21, 31, 40, and 50 are hereby amended. No new matter has been introduced. Support for this amendment can be found throughout the Application as originally filed.

Changes to claims are not admissions with respect to patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §101, §102, §103, or §112. Rather, these changes are clarifying and made in the spirit of compact prosecution and to round out the scope of protection to which Applicants are entitled.

II. EXAMINER INTERVIEW

On February 17, 2010, Applicants' representative conducted an interview with Examiners Rivell and Chaudry, for which the Applicants thank the Examiner. Applicants' agreed to remove the term "in use" from the independent claims, as per the Examiners suggestion. The Examiners indicated that the claimed features of Applicants' independent claims as presently amended overcome the cited art of record.

III. THE REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) HAVE BEEN OVERCOME

Claims 21, 22, and 28 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(b) over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0145894 to Burns (“*Burns*”) in view of Japanese Patent No. 2002277478 to Takehiko (“*Takehiko*”).

Claims 31, 33-35, and 48 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over *Burns* in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,376,252 to Ekstrom et al. (“*Ekstrom*”), and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 3,537,889 to Mets et al. (“*Mets*”).

Claim 36 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over *Burns* in view of *Ekstrom*, and *Mets* alone, or further in view *Takehiko*.

Claims 40, 41, and 47 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over *Burns* in view of *Ekstrom*, and further in view of *Mets*.

Claim 42 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over *Burns* in view of *Ekstrom* and *Mets*, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,509,085 to Kennedy (“*Kennedy*”).

Claim 46 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over *Burns* in view of *Ekstrom* and *Mets*, and further in view U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0040754 to Tomita et al. (“*Tomita*”).

Claim 50 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over *Burns* in view of *Ekstrom* and *Mets*, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,027,146 to Kurimoto (“*Kurimoto*”).

IV. RESPONSE

Independent claims 21, 31, 40, and 50 have been conformed to remove the “in use” term. In light of the Examiner Interview of February 17, 2010, Applicants respectfully submit that pending independent claims 21, 31, 40, and 50 are now in condition for allowance.

V. DEPENDENT CLAIMS

The other claims in this application are each dependent from one of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for at least the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all of the claims in this application are patentable and Applicants respectfully request early passage to issue of the present application.

In the event the Examiner disagrees with any of statements appearing above with respect to the disclosures in the cited reference, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner specifically indicate those portions of the reference providing the basis for a contrary view.

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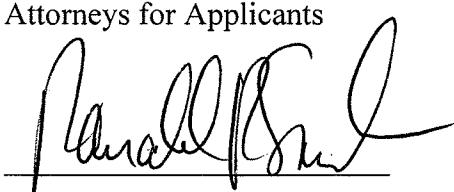
U.S. Application No. 10/534,592
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The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees that may be required to
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